

January 30, 2003

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Federal Communications Commission
Office of Secretary

02-277

Dear FCC Commissioners,

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We're writing to express our sincere hope that you will not decide to further deregulate the American media. We believe that in order to continue our country's traditions of free speech, open dialogue, and the exchange of ideas, **we** must make sure that there is ample opportunity for a wide variety of voices to be expressed in our local newspapers and on our airwaves. This will not happen if media ownership continues to be consolidated into the hands of a very few.

Since September 11, Americans have been enthusiastically embracing patriotism and American pride. The right to free speech is perhaps the quintessential symbol of American freedom. However, when a small number of media corporations owns our newspapers and radio and TV stations, the **array** of viewpoints that is essential to democratic exchange is much less likely to be given voice through the media. The average citizen's freedom of speech is seriously curtailed when fewer and fewer editorial boards and media executives are given the privilege of determining what to print or broadcast. Where will our voices be heard when we have something to say to the public? Who will give us (or other "average" people) the opportunity to engage in public debate if our local media owners disagree with our viewpoints or are determined to print or air only non-controversial or "profitable" stories that reflect their own (or their advertisers') perspectives?

The proposed deregulation as it applies to radio and TV flies in the face of the FCC's original mandate to regulate the airwaves in the public interest. Instead, the public airwaves have been **given** to private enterprise to determine what the public will see, hear, and, ultimately, believe. **This** progression has already set a dangerous precedent for our democracy and First Amendment rights; and further deregulation of the industry will continue that trend.

There *are* other reasons why we are strongly opposed to deregulation, including the threat to the livelihood of independent musicians, who are already shut out of most radio outlets; the danger that decreased regulation will further erode what we feel to be the already abysmal level of children's television programming; and the likelihood that less profitable programming will be eliminated, leaving the consumer with fewer choices.

Please *take* a stand in favor of our democracy over the interests of big **business** (and please remember that democracy and "free market" are not **synonymous**; there is nothing anti-democratic about government regulation for the public good). Please decide against media deregulation.

Sincerely,

Betsy Hedberg
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Golden, Colorado

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